

ELLIOT LAKE MALL ACTION COMMITTEE

Room 260, 99 Spine Road
Elliot Lake, Ontario

VICTIMS OF ELLIOT LAKE MALL DISASTER DEMAND INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF MINISTRY OF LABOUR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Elliot Lake, Ontario, May 8th, 2013 – The Elliot Lake Mall Action Committee (ELMAC) is demanding that Ontario Labour Minister Yasir Naqvi authorize an independent investigation into the failure of his own officials to prevent the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall, the deaths of two people, including lottery booth employee Lucie Aylwin, and the injuries of dozens of others.

The Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour, Sophie Dennis, testified at the Elliot Lake Inquiry last week that other jurisdictions and agencies had failed to prevent the collapse of the Mall. But she swore she was satisfied with the performance of the Ministry's Occupational Health and Safety Branch and confirmed that none of her officials had been charged or disciplined in the case.

“Ms. Dennis had a clear conflict-of-interest in investigating the actions of her own officials,” says John Pomerleau, the Chair of ELMAC. “Her investigation was cursory, and limited to a review of the reports filed by the Ministry's inspectors. Everyone has been thoroughly investigated by the Ministry of Labour, except the Ministry itself. It's not right.”

The Ministry of Labour inspection offices were housed in the Algo Centre Mall for 10 years, from 1985 until 1995. Despite obvious leaking from the roof parking deck, no action was taken by the Ministry until a formal complaint was filed in April 1995.

From 1995 to the day of the collapse on June 23, 2012, more than 30 complaints of health and safety violations were filed with the Ministry of Labour. Although numerous inspections were conducted, no orders were ever made under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to stop the leaks. One employee filed a complaint on the day of the collapse, and received an email in reply, directing them to an 800 number to request an inspector.

“We are calling on Minister Yasir Naqvi to bring in occupational health and safety inspectors from the federal government to thoroughly and impartially investigate his own careless officials and recommend charges or other actions if appropriate,” says Douglas Elliott, counsel to ELMAC at the Inquiry, “The ADM may be satisfied with her performance but the people of Elliot Lake are not.”

Elliott noted that Dennis repeatedly said that her officials were only a “check,” and that “employees were responsible for their own safety.”

“It’s though she is blaming Lucie Aylwin for her own death,” says Elliott. “People in Elliot Lake are sickened.”

For more information, call:
Douglas Elliott
Counsel to ELMAC
416-271-3052